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Free-trade fallacies
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FREE-TRADE FALLACIES REFUTED;

IN

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF
THE MORNING HERALD.

BY

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CHAIRMAN OF THE ACTING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF INDUSTRY AND CAPITAL THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE appearance of the following Letters has constituted an epoch in the struggle for Protection. The boldness of the attack on prevalent errors, and the startling exposure of mis-representations and fallacies lying at the very root of Free-trade pretensions, which they contain, have roused the ire and provoked the bitter hostility of the whole Free-trade Press. They have, of course, proportionately encouraged the friends of Protection, to whom they have furnished a compendium of facts, many of which were previously unsuspected, and a knowledge of which is of inestimable value at this momentous crisis. Such a general and earnest desire has been expressed for their collection and circulation in a form calculated to promote their diffusion, and ensure their permanence more efficiently than could be expected through the columns of a newspaper, that THE ACTING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF INDUSTRY AND CAPITAL THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE have felt it their duty to publish them (with the consent of the Author, and also of the Editor of the *Morning Herald*) as a separate pamphlet.

The Committee will not offer violence to the feelings of their highly-respected and able Chairman, by lengthened eulogy on compositions, which, for lucid arrangement, vigorous style, and powerful reasoning, have rarely been surpassed. But they earnestly recommend them to every true Protectionist, as a manual of facts and arguments conclusive of the truth of the principles defended by the writer with such masterly skill, and to every impartial and still undecided inquirer, as an unanswerable demonstration of the uncandid, disingenuous, and frequently false manner in which the information, indispensable to a just decision between the conflicting claims of the system of Free Imports (under the captivating but illusive title of Free Trade) and that of Protection, is presented to the public through the organs of the Free-traders.

SOUTH SEA HOUSE, LONDON,

April 26th, 1852.

FREE-TRADE FALLACIES REFUTED.

LETTER I.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING HERALD.

SIR,—But a few short weeks since and Protection was “dead,” and the formation of a Protectionist Administration “a simple impossibility.” The hebdomadal organ of the late Board of Trade teemed with partial and insidious statistics, exultingly proving the hopelessness of its revival;—Printing-house-square, with massive declamation and cutting irony, chaunted mocking requiems over the grave of the departed;—and Manchester consoled itself for the disappointment of its visions of reform, under the confident boast, that, at all events, the Hydra of Protection would never again rear its malignant head. Alas! for the uncertainty of political anticipations! Those weeks have passed;—a Protectionist Government is installed in office;—and a Free-trade House of Commons is about to be summarily sent back to the constituent body, to render an account of its misdeeds, and to renew on the hustings that fight which so many of its members vauntingly assured the country had been rendered utterly impossible by the triumphant victory they had already achieved and by the actual annihilation of the common enemy.

The conflict, then, for which the Protectionist party has so long calmly waited, is now inevitable. It is imminent. The importance of its results cannot be exaggerated; and it becomes, therefore, the imperative duty of all who recognise the gravity of the consequences that hang on the issue, to prepare promptly

and resolutely for the approaching struggle. It is fortunate for the cause of truth and justice, that, whatever the efforts, or whatever the expectations, of excited partisans, the question will, on the constitutional appeal about to be made to the country, be determined by the opinion of that intelligent and reflecting portion of the community, which, shrinking with instinctive reluctance from interference with ordinary politics, can only be roused to action by some urgent political necessity, and which (it may be confidently hoped) will pronounce its present decision actuated only by a desire to turn the scale on the side of policy and right. To this unbiassed and invaluable portion of the constituent body it is, at this crisis, of the utmost importance that the great facts, on a correct knowledge of which alone a sound judgement can be formed, should be fairly and truthfully presented. Yet, unfortunately for the cause of Protection, it is precisely in reference to these facts that the public mind has been most extensively misled. Deceived by erroneous statements, advanced under authority and maintained with equal talent and assurance, the masses of the people have a very inaccurate perception both of the real position of the great interests of the country and of the causes that have produced that degree of prosperity, of the present existence of which they are themselves conscious. Relying on the impartial fidelity of public records,—yielding implicit belief to the unscrupulous statements of political partisans who for party objects pander to their prejudices,—and stimulated by the exciting appeals continually addressed to the passions through the medium of the public press,—it is not surprising that the state of public opinion among the uninformed multitude should present formidable obstacles to the Protectionist party; nor can it be denied that, even among the more reflecting portion of the community, those circumstances should exercise a considerable and unfavourable influence. To correct, then, such errors, and to exhibit truth in its real colours, is (I think) the most valuable service that can be rendered to the cause to which I am devoted only because I conscientiously believe it to be founded on that immutable basis; and, believing that it is in my power to expose the falsity of many allegations constituting the staple of arguments, which, sustained (it must be admitted) with consummate talent, have exercised the most powerful as well as the most pernicious influence on the public mind, I am anxious to challenge

such plain investigation of facts as casuistry shall not be able to mystify or ingenuity to elude.

Impelled to this course by higher motives than any connected with mere personal considerations, I am sensible that it would be on the floor of the House of Commons or on the public hustings that the duty would be most fitly discharged. But, prevented by an afflictive dispensation of Providence from the power of acquitting my conscience in that which would be the most appropriate field of action, I cannot feel myself thereby discharged from the obligation of employing such means as are left me for dispelling error, exhibiting truth, and thus vindicating the principles I advocate, and to which such universal and transcendent interest is at this moment attached. In this effort I venture to ask the aid of your columns; and, if my request be granted, I am not without hope that, in a very few consecutive letters, I shall be able to unmask such a tissue of mis-statements, and to expose such a series of fallacies, as may tend in some degree at least to disabuse the public mind. In this endeavour I propose especially to grapple with the errors of fact and the sophistical reasonings, with which, after a long period of contemptuous indifference, the *Times* has recently laboured, day after day, to pervert the truth and give a false direction to public opinion in the absorbing controversy between Free-trade (as it is absurdly called) and Protection. Of the influence acquired by that powerful Journal, from the high and unquestionable talent with which it is conducted and the enormous extent of its circulation, it were folly to insinuate a doubt. But, when the *great public instructor* descends to the position of a *great public agitator*, it is right that its intrinsic claims to the influence it possesses should be submitted to impartial examination, before the agitation has become uncontrollable; and, in tracking its devious course,—fairly and temperately as I hope, but firmly, as, with your permission, I am resolved to do,—while I unaffectedly disclaim all idea of measuring strength with its talents, I have so much reliance on the fairness of my countrymen, as to inspire me with strong confidence that the facts I am prepared to submit to them will induce many to hesitate in longer surrendering their judgements to the dictum of the *Times*, and lead not a few to the conviction that in the maintenance of a policy justly protective to domestic interests, under the administration of the Earl of Derby, will eventually be

ensured a greater degree of national prosperity and individual happiness, than has been hitherto produced by cosmopolitan and inconsistent theories under either a Peel or a Russell, or than could ever be hoped for through such a system under a Cobden, a Bright, or a Graham.

I am, etc.

April 3rd, 1852.

LETTER II.

SIR,—I have already intimated that, in the investigation to which I am anxious to invite public attention, I propose in an especial manner to grapple with certain assertions and arguments which have recently appeared in the *Times*, and which have, I am aware, produced a profound impression on the public mind. I refer, not so much to the gratuitous assumptions, the ingenious sophisms, the sweeping denunciations, the ironical sarcasms, with which it is the wont of that able but Protean Journal on most occasions to amuse and delude a credulous public; but the articles to which I particularly refer, departing somewhat unguardedly from the vague and therefore safe generalities under which its fallacies are usually cloaked, have fortunately presented the whole case at issue in a sufficiently comprehensive and intelligible form, to enable me, by analysis of their allegations and arguments, to bring fairly under examination most of the points essential to be decided in the present stage of the controversy. Dismissing, then, all present discussion of the elementary principles of Free-trade and Protection and all consideration of abstractions,—of which the public is, perhaps, justly weary,—it is my intention, in the letters which, by your courtesy, I am permitted to publish in your columns, to limit my task to an impartial examination of some assertions of alleged facts, most important to the argument, but which I believe to be utterly without foundation, and to an endeavour to elucidate other real facts of equal importance, which, as I also believe, have, for the express purpose of misleading the public, been artfully concealed or grossly misrepresented.

The leading points dogmatically decided by the *Times*, in

the articles to which I allude, may, in general terms, be thus classed:—

1. The objects of the Protectionist party and the tendencies of the policy they advocate. These I find thus described:—

“ To make rents high and farmers wealthy ; to take from the mouths of the poorer class of consumers ten million quarters of grain per year ; to reduce the consumption of sugar from 23lbs per head to 9lbs ; to raise the price of the loaf from sixpence to tenpence.”

2. The alleged universal acquiescence of the people of this country (with the exception only of the agriculturists) in the policy of Free-trade. On this point the allegations are thus impudently and ridiculously exaggerated:—

“ We unhesitatingly affirm, as a notorious fact, that never on any one occasion, or in any class of society not actually concerned in the production of corn, has an opinion been expressed either adverse to free-trade or distrustful of its tendencies.” “ Never have the Protectionists gained a single convert.” “ Never have they demonstrated a single proposition of their own, or convicted a single doctrine of their opponents.” “ No one objects to free-trade except the landowners.”

3. The allegation of the prosperous results of the Free-trade policy, as incontestably demonstrated by the statistics of exports and imports, consumption, commerce, navigation, revenue, and pauperism. These are all enumerated, and then summarily disposed of by this flippant remark:—

“ So manifest and unmistakeable has been the prosperity of the country during the period of free-trade, and so directly is this prosperity traceable to the policy in question, that to dispute the matter is a perfect absurdity.”

Sir, after such a declaration from such an authority, it may seem presumptuous to venture on further discussion. But, as the task I have undertaken involves the necessity of disputing both the conclusions deduced in the foregoing extracts and the accuracy of the premises on which they are founded, I must in the outset protest against the dogmatic unfairness which would convict me of absurdity by anticipation.

Previously, however, to entering on the examination I propose, I must venture a few remarks on the mingled ingenuity and inconsistency of my opponents in the selection of the name given

by them to the system they support—FREE TRADE! A noble and a seductive appellation! Sir, if I fail to show that the system, to which they have with unequalled assurance ventured to apply the term *free*, is the very reverse of all in which freedom of production and freedom of exchange consist, I will be content to be set down as the most drivelling reasoner that ever assumed the pen. But the promoters of the system I oppose know well the influence of a name, and especially of the term *free*, on the generous minds of Englishmen. This sentiment and its effects are well described in the *Times* itself, when treating on a different subject a few days since:—

“It is easy enough to pen sonorous periods about freedom of conscience and liberality in matters of belief. Such sentences find an echo in every generous mind. Just so is it with all declamation about freedom—freedom of conscience, freedom of opinion, *freedom of anything you will*. It is always unpleasant to come forward against those who inscribe such words on their banners.”

But, unpleasant as it may be, it is a duty to unmask the hypocrisy which assumes a tempting name to cover and conceal an unfair and inconsistent intention. Trade is exchange. “*Libre échange*” is the French translation of “free trade.” Exchange or trade, then, is bipartite—it must include two parties; and it is, therefore, nothing less than “a perfect absurdity,” indeed, to call that trade *free*, which is the arrangement of one of the exchanging parties alone, and from which the other withholds assent. But, independently of this general objection, can that trade (I ask) be justly called *free*, in which England, admitting into her markets the corn of France, without duty, let, or impediment, would find her corn met, if she were to export it to supply the markets of France, by enormous duties amounting to prohibition? Is it *free* trade for England to receive the cotton of America entirely untaxed, while the goods manufactured from that very cotton and transmitted in payment are saddled, on their arrival in an American port, with a tax of 30 per cent.? Is it *free* trade for the sugar of Cuba to be imported into England on an equality of duty with that of Colonial production, and the sugar of Jamaica to be excluded from the markets of Spain?—or for importations of Cuban produce in Spanish ships to be admitted on equal footing with similar importations in British ships, while the latter

are excluded from all participation in the carrying trade to Cuba, by discriminating duties in favour of Spanish navigation so enormous as to render shipments from hence in British bottoms impossible?

Nor is the inconsistency less with respect to production. Can that system, I ask, deserve the name of *free*, which forbids the agriculturist from cultivating such crops as he may prefer—absolutely prohibiting him from growing tobacco when wheat is by the pressure of foreign competition rendered an unremunerative cultivation, and compelling him, at the same time, with double injustice, to use for his own consumption tobacco of foreign growth, paying a duty of 500 or 600 per cent.?—or that which prevents the West India Planter, ruined by the competition of the slave-holding sugar-grower, from engaging even the free labourer, to the employment of whom he is restricted by law, on such terms as they may mutually agree to give and receive; and which exposes him to every conceivable variety of impediment and restriction in his pursuits? Or is that *free trade*, which, condemning the British shipowner to unprotected competition with foreigners, the wages of whose seamen are 30s. per month, prohibits the employment of those seamen in the British ship, and compels him to navigate with sailors to whom he must pay 50s. or 60s. per month? I could multiply such instances *ad infinitum*; but these may well suffice. I stop not here to consider the *policy* of the regulations and restrictions I have described. These I may hereafter bring under consideration. But, whatever the result of a future examination of those questions, I think I have at least unanswerably demonstrated that our actual system of production and exchange is *fettered* in an extraordinary degree, and, therefore, that to apply to it the term “*free trade*” is an inconsistent assumption of a name totally opposed to its essence and spirit. Whether assumed for the purpose of deception, I care not to pronounce. That it has deceived, does deceive, and is therefore a dishonest appellation, must be a transparent truism. Having thus cleared the ground, I shall in my next letter proceed to examine in succession the several positions advanced by the *Times* to which I have referred, all of which I expect successfully to controvert.

I am, etc.

April 5th, 1852.

LETTER III.

SIR,—Having stripped the system I oppose of its borrowed plumes, and shown that instead of the name of “*free trade*,” which it has impudently assumed, it is simply and alone a system of *free imports*, I shall at once proceed to deal with the several allegations of the *Times* to which I have adverted, submitting them to examination successively and in the order I have already designated.

First, then, it is asserted, that it is the object of the Protectionist party and the tendency of the policy they support—

“ To make rents high and farmers wealthy ; to take from the mouths of the poorer classes of consumers ten million quarters of grain per year ; to reduce the consumption of sugar from twenty-three pounds per head to nine pounds, and to raise the price of the loaf from sixpence to tenpence.”

These are all distinct and unqualified assertions. I distinctly affirm, and I hope to prove, that each and all of them are directly and positively unfounded ; that not only are they in fact untrue, but that the most superficial examination must have shown that most of them could not by any possibility be true. And, if I succeed, I think it will be admitted, even by the admirers of the *Times*, that to mislead and inflame the public mind by recklessly advancing such charges, is a course unworthy of that influential Journal and altogether unjustifiable.

I may pass over with slight remark the imputations thrown on the landlords and the farmers. The motives by which human conduct is influenced are necessarily inscrutable—it is from overt acts alone that they can be inferred. In deducing such inferences, candour and liberality will always judge as favourably as actual circumstances will permit ; and, if it be ungenerous and illiberal to attribute to improper intention acts that may have originated in motives blameless, or even commendable, it is not very consistent in the liberal *Times* to pronounce without proof so harsh a judgement. I have yet to learn that it is a crime in a landlord to desire that his rents should not decline. But when it is recollected that the repeal of the Corn Laws was assented to by a Parliament, one portion of which consists *entirely*, and the other

chiefly, of landowners; and when it is known, as it must be to every journalist, that throughout the struggle that has, during the last three years, agitated the agricultural districts, the landlords have been continually reproached with supineness and indifference to the restoration of Protection; it does (I confess) seem singular that this "railing accusation" should be levelled at them as a class. For the farmers it may well be said that such a charge as that of their demanding Protection in order that they may become "wealthy," is as novel as it is unfounded. The lust of riches has usually, as well as justly, been considered more congenial with the spirit of the money-lords and the cotton-lords than with that of men who follow the peaceful pursuits of agriculture. All that the farmer has ever required is, notoriously, that he may be enabled by patient industry to earn a maintenance for himself and his family, and to obtain a moderate return on his invested capital. With this, I affirm on his behalf, he would be well content. The acquisition of "wealth" has never, I believe, entered into his most sanguine anticipations.

Passing, however, from motives, that cannot be traced, to tendencies and facts which we may accurately track, let us examine, first, the broad assertion that the result of a return to Protection would be "to take from the mouths of the poorer classes of consumers 10,000,000 quarters of grain per year." It will, I presume, be admitted, that the utmost effect of a return to the *old* policy of Protection could only be, to "take out of the mouths of the consumers" that quantity of grain that has been put into those mouths by the *new* policy of Free-trade. This is declared to be 10,000,000 quarters annually. Sir, is it really true, that the importations of corn since the repeal of the Corn Laws have made this prodigious addition to the sustenance of the British people? I say it is utterly untrue; and here I first join issue with the *Times*.

I find that the total number of quarters of corn, and of flour and meal reduced to quarters, imported during the past year, was not 10,000,000, but 9,686,118 qrs. But this quantity (be it observed) comprises *cereal produce and pulse of every description*; and, as the British people are not yet so reduced as to feed on oats and horsebeans, our present inquiry is of course limited to wheat and wheat-flour, on which they really do subsist. Now, of wheat and wheat-flour, the quantity imported was equal to

only 5,369,742 qrs.; and thus nearly one-half of the statement is at once disposed of. But it will further be obvious, that if, before the repeal of the Corn Laws, this description of produce was in *any* quantity imported from foreign countries, the *addition* made to the food of the population by the repeal can only, by possibility, amount to the *increased* quantity subsequently imported, and cannot be measured by the *total* importation. On the average of seven years preceding 1846, when the repeal was sanctioned by the Legislature, I find that the import of wheat and wheat-flour was, under the Protective laws, 1,842,069 qrs., and in that year it amounted to no less than 2,943,926 qrs., which, deducted from last year's import, leaves but 2,425,816—or less than one-fourth of the alleged 10,000,000 qrs.—as the utmost additional quantity that *could by any possibility have been put into*, and, consequently, that could now by any possibility be taken out of, the mouths of the consumers by a change in the law. This, of itself, is pretty well; but I think I can show substantial reason for carrying the question even further, and for the belief that the foreign wheat imported has been little, if at all, more than a mere substitute for home-grown wheat, the production of which has equivalently diminished. The supposition of such a fact being possible will be alarming to those who regard with apprehension a dependence on foreign supplies for the subsistence of the people; but, if it can be shown to be an actual fact, it will at all events dispose at once of Sir Robert Peel's vaunting questions, as well as of the astounding allegation of the *Times*, and will confine the benefit derived by the British people from the repeal of the Corn Laws entirely to the equivocal advantage of reduction of price, on which I may have a word to say hereafter. Let us, however, examine the grounds for this supposition.

And, first, I find from the official reports of Captain Larcom, the Government commissioner, that agricultural production in Ireland has enormously diminished since the repeal of the Corn Laws; that of wheat, which in 1847 was 2,926,733 qrs., having, in 1850, fallen to 1,550,196 qrs.—a diminution of no less than 1,376,537 qrs. Here, then, is a positive proved decrease of home-produced food, which, deducted from the 2,425,816 qrs. to which we have already reduced the addition made by importation, leaves the utmost possible amount of that addition but 1,049,279 qrs., instead of the boasted 10,000,000 qrs. But I

find, further, from the corn inspectors' returns, that, in the 290 towns in England and Wales from the weekly sales in which the imperial averages are computed, the quantity of wheat sold in the markets of those towns, which in 1846 was 5,958,962 qrs. (corresponding very nearly with the average sales of several preceding years), was reduced in 1850 to 4,688,246 qrs., being a diminution of no less than 1,270,756 qrs.; so that, without taking any account of the like diminution which may fairly be assumed to have taken place in the markets not included in the corn inspectors' returns, and also in Scotland, the actual diminution shown by those returns, coupled with the proved diminution of production in Ireland, more than counterbalances the whole increased import, and establishes what I believe to be the real fact, that *the consumption of wheat has not increased at all since the repeal of the Corn Laws*, and that, consequently, if even a return (which is not asked) to those laws were to take place, instead of "taking 10,000,000 qrs. of grain out of the mouths of the poorer classes of consumers,"—provided home production and foreign import were also to be restored to the same condition as before the repeal,—the quantity of grain for the subsistence of the population would be subjected by such return to no diminution whatever. Adding only that the calculations as to the diminished growth of wheat are entirely corroborated by extensive personal inquiries in agricultural districts, I leave these facts for reflection and reply.

The next charge is, that the change of policy which the Protectionists are supposed to advocate would "reduce the consumption of sugar from 23lbs. per head to 9lbs." Sir, when I read this assertion, I supposed, of course,—though the supposition was opposed to all my general statistical recollections,—that I should find that the consumption of sugar per head, which is thus stated to be now, under the Free-trade system, 23lbs. annually, was, previously to the passing of the law by which the importation is at present regulated, as low as 9lbs. I consulted Porter's "Progress of the Nation." At page 513 of the latest edition I find a Table, in which is recorded the average consumption of sugar by each person in each year from 1830 to 1849; and from that Table it appears that the consumption has never been lower, during that long period, than 15½lbs. per head, which was in 1840, when the average price was 73s. 10d. per cwt.; that it exceeded 20lbs. per head in 1831, when the price was 47s. 8d. per cwt.; and that it

was actually more than 21½lbs. in 1846, when the late law was repealed, the price being then 48s. 5d. per cwt. The average price in December last was about 31s., and the present consumption is stated at 23lbs.; so that a reduction of price by Free-trade to the extent of about 35 per cent., to the utter ruin of the producers, has, on the showing of the *Times*, only stimulated consumption 1½lb. per annum; while that Journal has the incredible hardihood to assert, that the restoration of a law under which the consumption was actually 21½lbs., would reduce it to 9lbs., a rate which I really believe will not be found to have existed during the present century. On this most outrageous misrepresentation it is unnecessary that I should offer any comment.

I am brought now to the allegation that the Protectionists desire “to raise the price of the loaf from 6d. to 10d.” It may be assumed as a closely approximate calculation, that the price of the 4 lb. loaf consumed by the poor may be estimated at 1d. for every 10s. of average price of wheat, with the addition of 1d. per loaf to meet the cost of manufacture, etc. Thus, with wheat at 40s., the price of the loaf should be 5d.; and, accordingly, I find that, the last imperial average being 42s. 5d., the 4 lb. loaf is now ticketed in bakers’ shops at 5½d. At this estimate, in order to justify a price of 10d., wheat ought to be at an average of 90s.; and as, under the abrogated law, foreign corn was admissible at the 1s. duty when the imperial averages reached 73s., the assumption of even a renewal of that law raising the price to 90s. becomes simply ridiculous. But it is well known, that such a price is as unsought and undesired by the agriculturists as it is impossible to be obtained through the operation of any law whatever. It is certain, that, if the price of wheat could be kept at an average of 50s., moderate as that price would be, the farmers would make the best of it,—the cost of the poor man’s loaf would be 6d.,—and all might be content. I again ask, therefore, whether it is creditable to the *Times*, that its high talent and enormous influence should be employed to inflame the minds of the uninformed and unreflecting, by statements which, on the most charitable construction of motives, it is difficult to imagine its writers could have believed to be true.

I think I have now effectually disposed of the *Times*’ libel on the landlords and farmers,—of its *grain* fallacy, its *sugar* fallacy, and its *loaf* fallacy. In my next letter, I propose to grapple with

the assertions advanced in support of the declaration that the country (with the exception only of agriculturists) universally acquiesces in the policy of Free-trade—an assertion which the approaching elections will happily submit to a better test than the opinion of the *Times*.

I remain, etc.

April 7th, 1852.

LETTER IV.

SIR,—Among the maxims inculcated by the most experienced adepts in the art of reasoning, none are more strongly insisted on than the prudence of never overstating a case, and the expediency, when maintaining a questionable position, of avoiding as far as possible all reference to particulars, restricting in such cases the argument to general and (if practicable) vague propositions. Never (I think) were these judicious precautions more unguardedly departed from than in the sweeping allegations of the *Times*, the refutation of which constitutes the next portion of the task I have undertaken. It appears, indeed, almost incomprehensible how a Journal, usually so astute and wary, should have ventured to commit itself by such ridiculous gasconade as the following:—

“ We unhesitatingly affirm, as a notorious fact, that never, *on any one occasion, or in any class of society* not actually concerned in the production of corn, has an opinion been expressed either adverse to free-trade or distrustful of its tendencies.” “ Never have the Protectionists gained *a single convert*.” “ Never have they demonstrated *a single proposition* of their own, or convicted *a single doctrine* of their opponents.” “ *No one* objects to free-trade except landowners.”

I confess, Sir, it is not without some sense of humiliation that I stoop to reason against such absurd rodomontade. It was, doubtless, intended for the edification of that portion of her Majesty's subjects who devoutly believe that all national enterprise is concentrated in Lancashire,—all patriotism in the Anti-Corn-Law League,—and all political wisdom in the Free-trade press. But the appearance in the “leading journal” of assertions marked

with such matchless effrontery renders it important that they should not pass uncontradicted, and I, therefore, proceed to dissect them.

First, then, it is declared that “never, *on any one occasion*, or *in any class of society* not actually concerned in the production of corn, has an opinion been expressed either adverse to Free-trade or distrustful of its tendencies.” Sir, the disproofs of this monstrous assertion crowd so thickly on me, that the only difficulty I experience is in making a selection. I trust I shall not be considered egotistical in referring first to a case in which I am personally concerned, as affording a signal refutation of this empty boast. I am myself “not concerned in the production of corn.” In July last, I presented myself to the constituency of Scarborough, the majority of whom are equally unconnected with agriculture, asking their suffrages, not simply under any allegation of “distrust of the tendencies” of Free-trade, but on the express grounds of my irreconcilable hostility to the whole system that had assumed the tempting name,—of the ruinous results it had already entailed on British agriculture, British colonies, and British shipping,—and of the certain misery which perseverance in that policy would bring on the whole industrial population engaged in every branch of British production. Here at least was no evasion, no concealment, no shrinking from the unequivocal assertion of the principle of Protection. And what was the result? Against disadvantages with which it is not worth while to trouble your readers, the majority of the electors of an important maritime borough gave the lie direct to the declaration of the *Times*, by returning me triumphantly to Parliament, to oppose, as I ever shall do, consistently and uncompromisingly, a system of which it is coolly asserted, that “no class of society has ever manifested suspicion or distrust.”

Sir, I have before me a copy of one of the innumerable petitions which have been presented to Parliament from ship-owners in all parts of the United Kingdom, complaining of severe and unprecedented distress, arising from “the severe competition of foreign shipping consequent on the repeal of the Navigation Laws, which has caused, not only a *great displacement of British tonnage*, but likewise a ruinous decline of freights in the various parts of the world.” I have resolutions of a numerous body of silk-weavers, declaring that the deplorable distress which they describe

as existing among that class of our industrial population "has been mainly brought about by mere theorists, who have sacrificed the commercial interests of this country to the promotion of a system of competition *fatal to the interests of the working classes.*" I have the resolutions of a public meeting of the inhabitants of the parish of Hanover, in Jamaica, *advertised in the Times of yesterday*, describing the consternation, alarm, and ruin that prevail throughout that magnificent Colony, which they declare to have "arisen from the Sugar Bills of 1846 and 1848, which placed us in unjust competition with slave-grown produce;" and I have the corroboration of these declarations in the resolutions of the House of Assembly itself, which has appointed a delegation to proceed to England, to submit to her Majesty's Government the certain ruin impending over the West India Colonies from perseverance in a system, of which, according to the *Times*, none but those who are concerned in the production of corn are distrustful!

These instances, may, I think, suffice on this part of the subject. Pass we next to examine the equally astounding assertion that—

"Never have the Protectionists gained a single convert."

I must be brief, or I could multiply without end examples in refutation of all these mis-statements. I am, however, fortunately enabled, with reference to the present assertion, to offer a disproof so unequivocal and of so singular a character, as may well absolve me from all necessity for adducing other evidence.

Sir, I have now before me the copy of a letter recently addressed by one of the most respectable merchants in Liverpool to Mr. George Wilson, chairman of the Anti-Corn-Law League, in reply to an application made to the writer to join in the renewed agitation stirred up by that mischievous faction. The following is an extract:—

"Dear Sir,—I have before me a circular, inviting me to attend a meeting having for its object the re-organisation of the Anti-Corn-Law League. I am invited, I conjecture, owing to my having been a *member of the Council of the League*. This affords me an opportunity of saying that *I have changed my opinions*. Previously, giving entire credence to the dogma that lies at the root of free-trade, that cheapness was the synonym of plenty, I was a warm advocate of free-trade. Let me confess, however, I never could clear my conscience, when pursuing

free-trade, that I was not injuring the British farmer. I soothed and allayed my feelings by anticipating a general prosperity. That prosperity never came," etc.

Surely this can need no comment.

The next assertion of the *Times* is the following:—

"Never have they [the Protectionists] demonstrated a single proposition of their own, or convicted a single doctrine of their opponents."

The opposite propositions and doctrines of the Free-traders and Protectionists may be conveniently tested by a comparison of the predictions, put forward by the two parties respectively, as to the effects that would be produced on the several great branches of our national interests by Free-trade legislation, with the results that have actually followed the adoption of that policy.

With respect to agriculture, it was the distinct assurance of Sir Robert Peel, when proposing the repeal of the Corn Laws, that under free importations the price of British-grown wheat would range at an average of 56s. per quarter. By the opponents of the measure it was asserted that under the proposed change, prices would fall ruinously low. The imperial average for the year 1846, when the bill passed into law, was 54s. 8d. For 1849, when it came into operation, it was 44s. 3d.; for 1850, 40s. 3d., and for the last year 38s. 7d.; agriculture being by this progressive reduction of price reduced to a condition of unprecedented depression.

With reference to the Colonies, it was equally unhesitatingly affirmed by the Free-trade authorities, when the Act was passed providing for the equalisation of the duties on foreign and colonial sugar, that tropical cultivation could be more cheaply carried on by free labour than by the labour of slaves, and that the colonists, therefore, had nothing to fear from the competition of the produce of Cuba and Brazil. The colonists, on the contrary, declared their inability to sustain such competition, and predicted the most disastrous results from being exposed to its pressure. When the Act passed in 1846, the average price of Muscovado sugar was 48s. 5d. per cwt. Every governor of every West India Colony has officially reported that slave labour is cheaper than free labour;—free labour in sufficient abundance is not to be obtained in many colonies on any terms;—the price of sugar has fallen 35 per

cent.;—the colonists are reduced to a state of despair, and are rapidly abandoning the cultivation of their estates,—and the Sugar Colonies appear doomed to extinction as dependencies of the British Crown.

Next—for I must pass rapidly on—let me direct attention to the shipping interest. The country was unequivocally assured by the Free-trade Minister at whose recommendation the Navigation Laws were repealed, that, under the unrestricted competition to which it was proposed to subject the British ship-owner, maritime commerce would be increased, and that British shipping would obtain the lion's share of the augmentation. The Protectionists insisted that the British shipowner would be unable to sustain the competition. Let us see which of these predictions has been verified by the result. The total inward entries of tonnage have, it is true, advanced from 6,071,269 tons in 1849, the year of repeal, to 6,988,233 tons in 1851—*an increase, however, not greater than had previously occurred in equal time under the Protective system.* But the British portion, instead of advancing, as it had regularly and progressively done during a long succession of preceding years, is actually found to have *declined* from 4,390,375 tons in 1849, to 4,388,245 tons in 1851; while the foreign has *increased* from 1,680,894 to 2,599,988 tons, being nearly a million tons, or *fifty-five per cent.*; thus, by this enormous augmentation, checking the advance of British navigation,—fostering the maritime commerce of foreign nations,—inflicting the deepest injury on the British shipowner,—placing in jeopardy the naval power of the State,—refuting all the vaunting promises of the Free-trade Minister,—and confirming, to the letter, the predictions of the Protectionist opponents of one of the most impolitic, unpatriotic, and disastrous enactments that ever defaced the pages of British legislation.

But I have reserved for the last illustration the most signal refutation of the idle vaunt that “the Protectionists have never convicted a single doctrine of their opponents;” because it is so remarkable and so important, that, if it stood alone, it might well suffice to shiver to atoms all the arrogant pretensions of those opponents, and to shame the Journal that ventures to assure the public that the system has accomplished the objects its promoters promised, and is universally acquiesced in with the single exception of one section of the British people.

It will (I presume) be admitted, that, of all the arguments advanced by the advocates for the repeal of the Corn Laws, none was more forcibly pressed on the Legislature and the public than that our restrictions on the import of foreign grain were the cause of our comparatively limited trade with the corn-growing countries of Europe. It was urged, with much specious plausibility, that to be sellers we must be buyers, and that if we would but consent to admit the agricultural—which was the principal exportable—produce of those countries into our markets, a boundless field would be opened for the sale of British produce and manufactures in the markets of the Continent. The argument was captivating—it was successful; and it will scarcely be denied that, of all the glowing anticipations of expected benefit from the repeal of the Corn Laws, none was promised or looked for with more undoubting confidence than that of *a prodigious extension of European demand* for the produce of our looms and our factories. I venture earnestly to invite the attention of the public to the following simple and conclusive statements.

In the year 1845, the quantity of wheat and wheat-flour imported from Russia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Prussia, Germany, Holland, Belgium and France,—comprising all the corn-growing countries of northern and central Europe,—was 725,808 quarters. In that year, the declared value of British produce and manufactures exported to the same countries was 17,504,417*l.* In 1849, the wheat and wheat-flour imported from those countries had advanced to 3,363,930 qrs., and *the declared value of the exports to them had declined to 15,274,639*l.** Yet the aggregate exports from this country to all parts of the world had increased during the same period from 60,111,082*l.* to 63,596,025*l.* So that we have this remarkable disproof of the promise of the Anti-Corn-Law-League, that not only were British commerce and manufactures not advanced by the sacrifice of British agriculture, but that while, in compliance with their illusory theories and empty predictions, we increased our importations of food from European countries much more than fourfold, in expectation of a proportionate extension of export of British productions, the export to the countries from which we took this food actually declined 2,229,778*l.*, or more than 12½ per cent.! And then our candid Free-trade reasoners suppress this astonishing refutation of all their doctrines, and, pointing to the extension of our *general*

exports,—the increase of which has been to countries totally unaffected by either corn-importations or Free-trade,—with their usual assurance they coolly appropriate to their theory all the credit of the advance, and exultingly declare that, as exports have increased since the Corn Laws were repealed and Free-trade has been in the ascendant, it is to these changes that the great extension of our commerce is entirely to be attributed. And the *Times* endorses the lie,—and the credulous millions believe it!

In proceeding to the next allegation, “that the system of Free-trade has produced prosperity, universal and unmistakeable, as demonstrated by the statistics of every great department of British interests,” I am much mistaken if I shall not be able to establish that this assumption is as gratuitous and groundless as I believe your impartial readers will now admit the declarations of the *Times* to have been, that the people of this country universally acquiesce in the policy of Free-trade,—that the promises of its promoters have been universally fulfilled,—and that the predictions of its opponents have been universally falsified by experience.

I remain, etc.

April 7th, 1852.

LETTER V.

SIR,—I proceed next to examine the triumphant boast of the *Times* that universal prosperity prevails,—the confident declaration that this prosperity is unmistakeably traceable to the Free-trade policy,—and the value of the evidence advanced to prove that both propositions are unanswerably demonstrated by the statistics of exports and imports, consumption, commerce, navigation, pauperism, and revenue. Believing, on the contrary, that, to a large extent, *activity* is mistaken for *prosperity*,—that the degree of prosperity which actually prevails is hollow and evanescent,—that, where it is found, it exists, not *in consequence*, but *in spite* of Free-trade,—and that, if a just and judicious Protection had been continued to all the great branches of our national interests, the social, political, financial, and commercial position of the State would have exhibited at this moment a far higher development of the national resources, and a far more prosperous condition of

the people, than now prevail;—believing all this, in opposition to what I regard as mere vainglorious and empty boasting, I challenge a rigorous criticism of the analysis which I proceed to present of the several heads under which these proofs of prosperity are classed.

And, first in order, I take exports, imports, and consumption. That the actual amount of these during the two last years has been prodigious, is not to be denied. But, first, I submit that equal or greater advance had at former periods been made under the Protective system; and, next, that commercial prosperity is not to be inferred from *extent* of transactions alone, but that the most important element of prosperity is the *profit* resulting from them. The records of the Court of Bankruptcy exhibit daily evidence of gigantic speculations, ending in the *Gazette* to the trader and a dividend of a few shillings in the pound to the creditor. Surely this will not be admitted as prosperity. It is not always on the surface of a Board of Trade Return that the accurate reasoner will find conclusive proof of the actual state of the public interests. It is true that the declared value of the principal articles of British produce and manufactures exported, which in 1846 was 51,227,060*l.*, has advanced in 1851 to 68,492,659*l.*; showing an increase of 17,265,599*l.*, or *an annual average of 3,453,120*l.* under Free-trade.* But I also find that the declared value of exports, which in 1842 was 47,381,023*l.*, had advanced in 1845 to 60,111,082*l.*; being an increase of 12,730,059*l.* in three years, or *an annual average of 4,243,353*l.* under Protection!* So that the assumption, that the recent advance in our exports must be attributable to Free-trade, is manifestly untenable; or, if the test be a just one, the facts are clearly in favour of Protection. This comparison of progression under the former, with that exhibited under the new system, is always studiously evaded, or carefully suppressed, by the Free-traders. But the real question, after all, is not what has been the extent of our exports and imports, but what has been the *result* to the exporters and importers, and consequently to the national capital invested. On this point I make the *Times* itself my witness. In its columns, throughout the year, may be found the most lamentable records of the gloomy and unsatisfactory state of the markets of India, China, Brazil, and every distant country; and, at length, in a general review of the commercial transactions of the past year,

it presents this conclusive refutation of the commercial prosperity which it yet, with marvellous inconsistency, assures us it is *perfectly absurd* to dispute:—

“A year of greater anomalies has never been witnessed. To the mass of the people it has been the most prosperous on record, while to the mercantile classes it has been chequered by anxieties and prolonged losses.”

And again:—

“Failures from past transactions may no doubt be looked for, in consequence of the *enormous losses* sustained upon the *exports* made in the last year, and the *still greater losses* on imports.”

Losses on imports *greater than enormous!*

Sir, the plain truth is, that the whole course of our export trade is turned from its legitimate channels. Instead of being regulated by the actual demand of foreign markets, enormous quantities of goods are now sent to all parts of the world by greedy manufacturers, on the merest speculation. Merchants encourage these adventurers by advances,—secure of their commissions, their only care. Every market is deluged with commodities, of which sales can only be forced at ruinous prices; and the necessary result is the *enormous losses* to which the *Times* bears such irrefragable testimony.

Turn we now to the imports, the magnitude of which is astounding and not unnaturally leads superficial reasoners to the conclusion, to which the *Times* so inconsistently lends its aid, that they afford indisputable evidence of prosperity. Of the *real* value of these we have no authentic accounts; the *official* value, given in the public returns, showing only relative quantities as compared with former years. But those quantities are undoubtedly prodigious. Of tea, the quantity imported during the past year was 71,466,460 lbs.; of sugar, 889,281,680 lbs.; of wine, 9,008,420 gallons; of cocoa, 6,773,960 lbs.; of currants, 80,764,208 lbs. But, as I have already remarked, it is not importation alone that constitutes prosperity. If increased quantities of goods are exported, they must of course be paid for by increased imports. It is to the power of consumption of these imports by the people that we must look, in order to test the alleged prosperity. Now, tried by this, the only just standard, I find that, of the tea imported, we consumed

53,965,112 lbs. and re-exported 4,524,599 lbs.; leaving, after all the stimulus to consumption afforded by the low prices which have entailed such *enormous losses* on the importers, an excess of no less than 12,976,749 lbs. Of sugar, the excess of importation over consumption and re-export—both still more stimulated by ruinous reduction of price—is 154,093,632 lbs.; of wine, 772,562 gallons; of cocoa, 2,206,167 lbs.; and of currants, the especial luxury of the poor, 29,831,536 lbs. So that, after all, the fact is beyond dispute, that, having imprudently sent to all parts of the world quantities of British produce and manufactures far beyond the wants of the places to which they were consigned, they have been sold at enormous loss; and payment has been taken in articles for home consumption, which, when brought to this country, can neither find purchasers at home, nor be re-exported without further loss. And, concealing all these discouraging and unprosperous circumstances, Free-trade journalists and reasoners coolly direct the attention of the cheated public to the Board of Trade Returns, exhibiting increasing exports and imports, and ask them to receive their delusive (when unexplained) accounts, as so unanswerably proving the benefits of a Free-trade policy, that “to dispute the matter is a perfect absurdity!”

But I doubt not, that, even by many who may be disposed candidly to admit the impressive character of the facts I have adduced, as calculated to shake confidence in the deduction of prosperity from the amount of our export and import trade, I shall be met by the argument, that the actually increased consumption of articles of luxury by the people affords indisputable evidence that their power of purchase has improved under the system of Free-trade. Sir, I have not attempted to deny, that, concurrently with the changes whose policy I impugn, the condition of the masses has improved. But “*post hoc, propter hoc*,” is not always a very safe ground for reasoning; and I have already pointed out the gross unfairness with which the Free-traders pompously parade every instance of improvement under the existence of their system, claiming for that system exclusively the merit of the improvement, and suppressing the fact that equal or greater advances had been made under the system they malign. This is especially the case in the point now under consideration. Let us take as an illustration the article of tea.

The consumption, which in 1841 amounted to 36,684,797 lbs.,

is triumphantly contrasted with that of 53,965,112 lbs. in 1851. But it was not till 1849 that the repeal of the Corn Laws came into operation, and that cheap bread is alleged to have so prodigiously extended the consuming power of the people. In that year, the quantity of tea entered for home consumption was 50,024,917 lbs.; so that, in the succeeding two years, with an average price of wheat of about 40s. per quarter, consumption had increased 3,940,195 lbs. But I find that, under the exploded and vilified system of Protection, which is declared to have denied to the people all power of purchasing luxuries, the consumption of tea, which in 1842 was 37,391,012 lbs., had advanced in 1844 to 41,369,351 lbs.; being an increase of 3,978,339 lbs. in the same period by a smaller population, and with wheat at an average price of about 53s. So also with sugar, the consumption of which was 5,922,386 cwts. in 1849, we find an advance in 1851 to 6,255,574 cwts., or an increase in two years of 333,188 cwts. But the consumption, which in 1844 was 4,139,983 cwts., had increased in 1846—the year in which the disastrous Free-trade change of duties took place—to 5,231,946 cwts., or no less in two years than 1,109,960 cwts. I think, then, that to attribute to Free-trade changes the increased consumption of luxuries by the people, may well be pronounced something more than “an absurdity.” If the principle of the reasoning be admitted, I ask whether the instances I have adduced do not, on the contrary, constitute an unanswerable demonstration in favour of the policy of Protection.

I have been led, in the course of my preceding reasoning, in some measure to anticipate the arguments deducible from the statistics of general commerce and navigation. These, therefore, may be briefly disposed of; when I shall proceed to invite attention to some remaining branches of the national interests, which (I believe I shall be able to show) demonstrate, equally with those I have passed under examination, the vain and untenable boastings of the *Times*. But these I must reserve for another letter.

Meantime, I remain, etc.

April 8th, 1852.

LETTER VI.

SIR,—The startling facts to which I have drawn attention in my former letters, in relation to exports, imports, and consumption, will have sufficed for answer to the boast that prosperity is proved by the magnitude of each, as exhibited in the public Returns. Till the *Times* can reconcile the admission of “enormous losses” on all commercial transactions with the allegation of a prosperous state of commerce, the conclusion may be safely left to the judgement of every impartial inquirer; and it will be singular indeed if the decision be in favour of the consistency or authority of the “leading journal.” I could easily trace similarly unprosperous results as pervading almost every branch of trade during the past year; but it is unnecessary, perhaps, to pursue further this portion of the inquiry. I cannot, however, finally dismiss it without earnestly inviting the serious consideration of your readers to the solemn warning afforded by the extraordinary conjunction of an unprecedented extent of commerce with admitted “enormous loss.” Of the ominous nature of such an unnatural combination I could not draw a more striking picture than I have now before me—sketched by no Protectionist hand, but thus vividly portrayed by a master of the dismal science, furnishing an authority which no Free-trader ought to venture to dispute. In M'Culloch's “Principles of Political Economy,” at page 108, I thus read:—

“No certain conclusion respecting the prosperity of any country can ever be drawn from considering the *amount of its commerce or revenue, or the state of its agriculture or manufactures.* The AVERAGE RATE OF PROFIT is the real barometer—the true and infallible criterion of national prosperity. Though agriculture, manufactures, and commerce should be carried to a greater extent than they have ever been carried before—though a nation should have numerous, powerful, and well-appointed armies and fleets—and though the style of living should be more than ordinarily sumptuous—still, if the rate of profit has become comparatively low, we may confidently affirm that the condition of that nation, *however prosperous in appearance, is bad and unsound at bottom*—that the plague of poverty is secretly creeping on the mass of her citizens—that the foundations of her power and greatness have been

shaken—and that *her decline may be confidently anticipated*, unless measures can be devised for relieving the pressure by adding to the rate of profit.”

I should but weaken the force of this striking passage by adding comment. But it will not escape attention, that the case we are considering is one not of a *low rate of profit*, but of *enormous loss* !

I pass on briefly to refer to the proof of “prosperity” afforded by a review of the state of our shipping and colonial interests.

With respect to the former, I have already stated its deeply depressed condition, and, on the evidence afforded by public returns, I have connected that condition with the fatal repeal of the Navigation Laws. Here, again, a comparison of the actual progression of this interest under the former Protective system contrasts remarkably with the results exhibited since the Free-trade system came into operation,—a contrast, as in other instances, studiously kept out of sight by Free-traders.

For a long period previous to the enactment of 1849, the tonnage engaged in the foreign trade of the country had been regularly and rapidly advancing. In 1836 the total tonnage entered inwards in our ports was 3,494,372 tons, of which 2,505,473, or about five-sevenths, were British, and 988,899, the remaining two-sevenths, foreign. In 1846, the total tonnage had advanced to 6,101,015; the British being 4,294,733, and the foreign 1,806,282. In 1849, the latest year of the Protective system, the total tonnage had further advanced to 6,919,900; the British amounting to 4,884,210, and the foreign to 2,035,690. It will thus be seen, that while, under the fostering Protection of the Navigation Laws, the maritime commerce of the country steadily and enormously advanced, the most irrefragable evidence was afforded, by the equally progressive advance of foreign with our own shipping, that the system, though protective of British interests, had no hostile or monopolising tendencies, the proportions being throughout preserved with singular regularity. On the first of January, 1850, the new system came into operation, and all was instantly reversed; for, by a Return just presented to Parliament, it appears, that while, in 1849, the last year of Protection, 4,390,375 tons of British shipping entered inwards with cargoes, only 4,388,245 tons entered in 1851, the second year of Free-trade; exhibiting, instead of the

continued and rapid increase shown under the abrogated system, an actual *decrease* of 2,130 tons! On the other hand, the same document informs us, that the foreign tonnage with cargoes, which, in 1849, was 1,680,894, had advanced in 1851 to the astonishing amount of 2,599,988 tons, being an *increase* of 919,094 tons, or 55 per cent.!! Thus is the advance of British navigation suddenly and recklessly checked, while general maritime commerce progresses only to extend the naval prosperity and power of foreign and rival States. It may, indeed, with truth be affirmed, that, if it had been delegated to a congress of foreign statesmen to frame a legislative enactment, by which the naval power of Britain should be crippled and that of foreign nations strengthened and extended, it would have been difficult for them to have devised a measure better calculated to effect that object than the law which owes its existence to the late British President of the Board of Trade. I know, indeed, that it is asserted by that amiable man, but feeble Minister, that the reason why the inward entries of British ships have diminished is, that they have found increased employment in the trade between neutral ports; but I tell him, as a commercial man, that little or no addition has taken place to such trades. I am myself acquainted with many instances of ships sailing from port to port in the eastern and southern oceans, seeking employment, but quitting port after port in ballast; and I know some in which the captains, despairing of obtaining, without long delay, cargoes at any rate of freight whatever, have discharged their crews and dismantled their ships in distant ports. In the *Times* of the 26th ult. will be found the following corroboration of this representation. Referring to the alleged discovery of a new guano island in the Pacific, it is remarked:—

“A discovery of this description, at a time when *so many ships are lying unemployed* at San Francisco, and *so many others are idle or seeking freight* in our Australian colonies, and also in India, we look on as a means of employment which our shipowners will gladly take advantage of.”

Sir, I could pursue this subject further, by showing the reductions that have taken place in the rates of freight from all parts of the world, owing almost entirely to the severity of the competition with foreign ships, consequent on the repeal of the

Navigation Laws. These reductions have, in many important trades, amounted to not less than 50 per cent.; and, no equivalent diminution of expenses having taken place, the actual losses of ship-owners during the last two years have been—like those of exporters and importers, as admitted by the *Times*,—“enormous.” It may, indeed, be safely averred, that while the capital engaged in British shipping has sunk in value at least 25 per cent., and its investment has been attended only with frightful loss, it is even now impossible for a shipowner to engage his ship for any voyage at a remunerative rate of freight, or to undertake a voyage in the usual mode of seeking homeward freight with any reasonable prospect of escaping loss. This is the “prosperous” condition of British navigation, which would, even on the face of the tonnage returns, tell a still more disastrous tale, were it not for a practice pursued in their compilation, which deserves explanation and exposure. I have stated that the inward entries of British shipping engaged in the foreign trade of the country amount annually to between 4,000,000 and 5,000,000 tons. That the entries are swelled to this immense amount by the tonnage of vessels making frequent voyages during the same year being repeated at each successive entry, is now pretty generally understood. But that these Returns include steam-vessels employed chiefly, or entirely, for the conveyance of passengers, is not equally known; and I believe that of the extent to which the inclusion of the small vessels engaged in the passenger communication with the nearer ports of the Continent exaggerates, by the enumeration of each vessel’s tonnage on every trip, the apparent aggregate tonnage supposed to be engaged in the foreign trade of the country, few have the remotest idea. At my instance, a Return has just been laid on the table of the House of Commons, from which it appears, that 101 British steam-vessels, of the aggregate tonnage of 21,988 tons, are represented in the public Returns as 579,330 tons;—one vessel, the *Princess Helena*, of 166 tons, having made during the year 123 trips from Folkestone to Boulogne, and figuring consequently as 20,418 tons; and another, the *Princess Clementine*, of 147 tons, as 18,963 tons! Thus, more than one-eighth of the shipping presumed, on the faith of Parliamentary Returns, to constitute the mercantile marine of the country, is found to consist of a few paltry passage-vessels,

contributing nothing to our maritime commerce, and nothing to our naval power!

I cannot close this branch of my subject without adverting,—and I do so in no spirit of unworthy jealousy, but as deeming it not undeserving the serious reflection of Englishmen,—to the rapid growth of the commercial marine of the United States of America, our most formidable rival in naval power. In 1842, the total amount of tonnage belonging to the United Kingdom was 3,619,850 tons;—to the United States, 2,092,390. In 1849, the tonnage of the United Kingdom had advanced to 4,144,115 tons, and that of the United States to 3,334,015 tons; showing an increase of 524,265 tons British, or $14\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and of 1,241,625 tons American, or nearly 60 per cent! So, also, while the shipping built and registered in the British Empire in 1849 was 245,130 tons, and in the United Kingdom only 121,266 tons, the tonnage built in the United States was 256,577 tons; and, if the present progressive rate of advance of each nation should continue, it is certain that in seven years America will possess a larger commercial marine than Great Britain.

I now turn to the Colonies;—but here I must be brief. I ask, however, to which of the colonial possessions of the British Crown will the *Times* refer its readers as exhibiting proof of that prosperity and contentment it so loudly vaunts? Is it Ceylon, or the Cape of Good Hope?—Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, or the West India Colonies? Sir, I have before me files of the most recent Jamaica papers, and the picture they exhibit of the condition of this once “bright jewel of the British Crown” is appalling:—the inhabitants of every parish in the island, assembled in public meetings, declaring the destruction of their property by the Free-trade Sugar Acts of 1846 and 1848;—the House of Assembly about to despatch a delegation to England, to lay before her Majesty the deplorable condition of every interest in the Colony, and the impossibility of the colonists continuing, under the present system, to pay the taxes requisite for the support of the Government;—the clergy uniting in attesting the “moral and physical desolation” of the population, and deploring the approaching relapse of the emancipated negroes into a state of barbarism;—the cultivation of estates abandoned, and their proprietors sinking into hopeless poverty. Such is the

condition to which this magnificent Colony is reduced, in order that the British people, who cheerfully paid, a few short years since, twenty millions sterling to strike the fetters from the limbs of the slave, may have their sugar a penny a pound cheaper, at the cost of all this wide-spread devastation and of again riveting the manacles on the unhappy sons of Africa. Such are the triumphs of Free-trade! How long shall they be endured?

I could tell too, did space permit, of the disgust and alienation pervading the minds of our North American colonists at the cold and selfish spirit in which, by following out the Manchester principle of cheapness, we have placed our Canadian fellow-subject on a footing with his Scandinavian rival in the importation of timber,—of the probability of this sordid policy recoiling on its authors by the establishment of a Zollverein between Canada and the United States for the reciprocal free importation of their respective productions, and the adoption by our own Colony of the American tariff of duties on the importation of British manufactures,—of the discontent of Newfoundland—the complaints of Mauritius,—in short, of the injury inflicted on, and the dissatisfaction produced in, every dependency of the British Empire, by the insane abandonment of the principle of giving to the productions of our Colonies a just preference in our markets over similar productions of foreign States. But I am recalled to the recollection that I have promised a general refutation of the audacious declaration of universal prosperity and content, advanced by Free-trade journals, and especially by the *Times*. Having performed this task with respect to the Colonies, I forbear from further trespassing on the attention of your readers on this branch of the subject. I must still ask permission to intrude on your columns with reference to some remaining portions of the national interests, whose prosperous condition is, with similar assurance and falsity, alleged by the partisans of Free-trade.

I remain, etc.

April 10th, 1852.

LETTER VII.

SIR,—My analysis is drawing towards a conclusion. It would, however, be incomplete if I were to omit some reference to the details of revenue, pauperism, and emigration, all tending to tone down the boastings of the *Times* as to the balmy prosperity produced by Free-trade on every interest of the State and every department of national industry.

And first, as to revenue. That the gross produce of the taxes has increased is undeniable. The *activity* which I have admitted has prevailed during the past year would necessarily augment the consumption of duty-paying articles—admitted also by the *Spectator*, in its last number, to have been stimulated by the “expenditure caused by the Great Exhibition.” To compensate for diminishing profits, every producer has laboured to increase the extent of his transactions. Hence a brisk demand for labour, on the one hand, while, on the other, the supply has been kept down by the deplorable diminution of the population in Ireland, and the continued increase of emigration from all parts of the United Kingdom. An abundant harvest and two successive winters of extraordinary mildness must, also, under any system of policy, have extended the means of purchase of the labouring classes. To them, therefore, I do not pretend to deny that circumstances have been, for the time, favourable; and hence, and hence alone, the present prosperous state of the revenue, and the comparatively comfortable condition of artisans and skilled labourers. But profit on capital is, after all, the *only real labour-fund*—the sole source from which the labour of an increasing population can find permanent and remunerative employment. Of its indispensable necessity for national prosperity I have adduced the unanswerable testimony of M'Culloch. Of its entire absence from the commercial transactions of 1851 I have given accumulated proof. But, if further evidence be needed, it is abundantly furnished by the revenue returns, flourishing as, in the aggregate, they may appear. The produce of the income-tax under schedule D, exhibiting the returns of income derived from trades and professions, tells an alarming tale. Assessed in 1846 on 60,888,094*l.*, the assessment in 1850 *had fallen to 54,977,566*l.*, and in 1851 it is little above 50,000,000*l.**

The omniscient *Times* professes itself at a loss to account for this significant symptom of incompatibility with the "prosperity" on which it insists; but the more candid *Spectator* frankly acknowledges that—

"Tradesmen are gradually doing business upon *less and less profits*. The aggregate bulk of trade is increasing, with the population on the one hand, and on the other, with the additional exertions to *push trade in every direction*; but *the return to the tradesman diminishes*, and the decline of the income-tax is among the *many circumstances* that indicate that process."

By a copy of a petition now before me for a repeal of the post-horse duty, I perceive also that the number of private carriages assessed for duty during the past year is 800 less than in the year preceding, and the amount of duty on horses let for hire is stated to have fallen off 10 per cent. This might not be deemed a very serious affair, if the increased power of consumption of the masses of the people could be reasonably calculated on as permanent. But, with a steadily diminishing rate of profit, I believe this to be impossible; and it can only, therefore, be regarded as an alarming indication that the incomes of the higher classes are falling off equally with those of the trading community. I could adduce other proofs from the revenue returns calculated to modify the triumphant tone in which those returns are referred to by Free-trade writers and reasoners as indisputable evidence of the prosperity they allege; but I may conclude with the recent emphatic declaration of Mr. Hume, when arguing against the expense to be incurred by the Militia Bill, that "*every man's income has been reduced.*"

I am brought now to a consideration of one of the most interesting portions of my enquiry into the real condition of the people—the comparative extent of poverty prevailing at different periods among the masses of the population. It suits the tactics of the Free-traders to bring this question, on all occasions, to the sole test of technical *pauperism*; and, founding their reasonings exclusively on Poor Law Returns (in the use of which, however, they are neither very candid nor very scrupulous), they affect to deduce from the latest accounts the most incontestable proof of the prosperity of which they boast. But the difference between *pauperism* and *poverty*, though never recognised by the Free-trader, is intelligible enough to the philanthropist and the impartial examiner. Pau-

perism, by the construction of the law, means *absolute destitution*. As long as a poor man has a table to eat from, a chair to sit on, or a bed to lie in, he is not, in the legalised estimation of the relieving officer, a pauper entitled to demand relief. That a diminution in the amount expended for the relief of the poor may co-exist with an extent of wretchedness and misery giving the lie to the assertion of universal prosperity, is easily conceivable. That it does at this very moment exist, I have proofs innumerable. In a copy of a memorial recently transmitted to me from Glasgow, it is stated, and on good authority, that "during the last four years the wages of the weavers have been reduced 40 per cent.—thousands are unable to procure even the common necessities of life—clothing is beyond our reach—poverty, rags, filth, disease, and death, seem to be our inevitable doom." Nor is ample evidence wanting of the fearful prevalence of similar misery even in the metropolis itself. In the *Times* of the 23rd ult., in a leading article, which distinctly avers that "since England was England, the general prosperity of the country has never reached so high a point as at the present moment," I read, in strange juxtaposition:—

"It is a lamentable fact, that, in this very town of London alone, the centre and core of British civilisation, *one hundred thousand persons are every day without food*, save it be the precarious produce of a passing job or a crime."

"It is stated in the Registrar General's report for 1849, that *nearly one human being dies weekly* in this wealthy metropolis *from actual starvation*. In the month of December, 1851, five adults died from starvation, and twenty-nine infants from inanition."

And then the statistics of relief given by one private Benevolent Society are quoted, from which it appears that in 1851 assistance was afforded to no less than 195,560 poor persons by that Society alone!

I by no means cite these appalling facts as casting reproach on the administration of the Poor Laws, although proofs are not wanting that in many instances poor-rates are diminished by great harshness and unfairness in the refusal of relief; but I cite them in order to impress on the public mind caution in receiving official returns from the Poor Law Department as conclusive evidence of the improved condition of the people, or official declarations of diminution in the number of paupers relieved, or

amount of money expended, as indisputable proofs of national prosperity. And I am the more impelled to this course, because, as I have shown in a letter which, by your courtesy, recently appeared in your columns, these Returns are frequently most unfairly paraded before Parliament and the public, for the purpose of producing, by general and unexplained statements, impressions favourable to the results of Free-trade, which a full and candid explanation would prove to be entirely unwarranted. Thus, as I showed plainly in the letter referred to, the Return ostentatiously laid on the table of the House of Commons on the first day of the Session, affirming a decrease in the number of adult able-bodied poor relieved on the 1st January, 1851, from the number relieved on the 1st January, 1850, of no less than 17,000 persons, led obviously to the inference that the diminution was entirely owing to the increased employment of the poor, the number in the former year being stated as upwards of 130,000. Yet I proved that, of that enormous number, only 5,348 were relieved on account of *want of work*, to which cause of relief alone the reasoning could apply; the remainder being made up of sick persons, mothers of illegitimate children, wives of men in gaol, and others,—a diminution in whose number might, indeed, prove improvement in sanitary condition or in morality, or a decrease of crime, but could have no possible connection with increased employment as the result of Free-trade, which inference (the detailed explanation being omitted) the statement was expressly intended to support.

But I cannot let the unfounded boasting of the Free-trade party on this branch of the subject rest even here. They have drawn very largely on the carelessness or obliviousness of their opponents, and, I am sorry to admit, with too much reason. They unceremoniously arrogate to their system, and especially to the cheapness of food which it has produced, the merit of having greatly diminished the burden of poor-rates, and endless have been the Returns concocted, the assurances advanced, and the letters published in maintenance of the pretension; and, strange to say, the Protectionists have to a great extent connived at the delusion, by omitting to expose it. The cool confidence with which the claim has been put forward has imposed on them, and prevented their challenging a comparison with the facts exhibited under a Protective policy, which, as in the case of commerce and navigation, would have told directly against the conclusions of the

Free-traders, and which have, consequently, always been ignored by them. Why, Sir, are even our friends aware that, although, during the last three years, the aggregate amount of poor-rates has decreased, *it still remains greater than it was before the Corn Laws were repealed?* I find by the Annual Report of the Poor Law Board, just published, that in 1846, the average price of wheat being 53s. 3d. per quarter, the total amount expended in relief and maintenance of the poor was 4,954,204l.; and that in 1851, with wheat at 39s. 11d. per quarter, it was 4,962,704l.; nay, that even in 1842, wheat being at 64s., it was only 4,911,498l. So that the boasted diminution of pauperism, after all, comes to this—that, *whereas in 1846 a contribution equal to about 1,869,510 quarters of wheat sufficed to defray the cost of relieving the destitute poor, the real property of the country is now called on to contribute an amount equal to about 2,455,749 quarters!* And this is vaunted as diminution! Can it be necessary to add more to give force to this refutation?

Emigration alone remains to be considered, and on this point few words may suffice. Unless the Free-traders are prepared to contend that the tendency is natural to run away from prosperity, it seems difficult for them to reconcile the allegation of the prosperous condition of the labouring classes in Great Britain, and the improved state of the survivors of Ireland's depopulation, with the still increasing "exodus" of the poor from both countries. The number of emigrants from the United Kingdom, which, in 1846, was 129,851, had, in 1849, advanced to 299,498; and the subsequent and still continuing rush to seek in foreign countries a less inhospitable abode than in the land of their fathers, affords indisputable proof that the blessings brought to the hearths and homes of the labouring classes by Free-trade are less estimated by them than by Free-trade Ministers, Manchester reformers, and the *Times*.

I have now concluded my promised analysis, and with it I contemplated the termination of my trespass on your columns. But my task appears to require some recapitulation and review of the whole case, as leading to a practical application of the inferences naturally flowing from the facts I have adduced; and for this purpose I propose, with your permission, to intrude on you with one more letter.

I am, etc.

April 13th, 1852.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,—In offering to the consideration of the public the series of letters which you have done me the favour of inserting in your columns, my leading endeavour has been to refute some of the most popular as well as pernicious of those fallacies which have been infused into the public mind on the subject of Free-trade and Protection through the influential agency of the *Times*. How far I have succeeded I must leave others to decide; but, in the task I have attempted, it has not been a mere barren triumph in argument at which I have aimed. Many of the errors I have exposed were indeed so transparent, that little dialectical skill was requisite for their detection; and I can claim small credit for having laid bare misrepresentations so gross that it is only surprising such an authority as the *Times* could have ventured to advance them. That sagacious Journal, however, forms probably a just estimate of the extent of public credulity, and has without scruple drawn on it accordingly. The bait has been swallowed, and the purpose, for the time, answered.

But, in the effort I have made, a more direct and practical object has impelled me. The struggle of the hustings approaches. The bold and confident lie, circulated through a thousand party channels, has a powerful effect on public opinion; and that opinion, opposed to Protectionist candidates, will present a formidable obstacle to their success, both in the canvass and at the poll. To furnish the friends of Protectionist principles with weapons drawn from the armoury of Truth, with which they may repel the assaults of their boasting opponents, may do service to the good cause; and if I have been fortunate enough to substantiate facts and establish conclusions calculated in any measure to dispel the delusions of the deceived, or to confirm the faith of the wavering, the labour which I have devoted to the task will not have been bestowed in vain. The processes having been elaborately followed out, the end I have in view would, however, be but imperfectly accomplished without such a brief and general review of the results as may, without much trouble, serve as a manual for reply to popular Free-trade sophisms. I consider, then, that it has been proved to demonstration—

That the name of *free* trade is unscrupulously assumed for the

purpose of misleading and deluding the people by a popular designation, not only inconsistent with, but utterly opposed to, the entire system to which it is applied; that system being, in fact, one of *free imports*, but, at the same time, of absolutely *fettered trade*.—

That the conduct and intentions of landowners and farmers, and the tendencies of the Protectionist legislation they demand, have been grossly and scandalously misrepresented by the Free-trade press:—

That a just Protection to British agriculture from the destructive effects of unrestricted foreign importation, instead of involving a great addition to the cost of food to the poor, as is insidiously and invidiously represented, might render the cultivation of the soil remunerative to the agriculturist, with but slight increase of the price of bread to the consumer:—

That, although the unrestricted importation of foreign corn has inflicted vast and irreparable injury on the British farmer, and has produced a most discouraging effect on British agriculture, *it is almost certain that it has not added at all to the quantity of food consumed by the British people,—if, indeed, it has not actually diminished it*:—

That the admission of foreign slave-grown sugar into the British market on equality of duty with sugar the produce of the British Colonies, while it has ruined the colonial producer, and violated every principle of humanity and consistency by stimulating and aggravating the horrors of slavery, has only increased the consumption of sugar in a very trifling degree, in direct contradiction to the unfounded declaration of Free-trade authorities, that it has increased it enormously and thus greatly added to the comfort of the labouring population:—

That experience has signally falsified many of the most confident predictions of the Free-traders; as, for instance, that a great extension of export of British produce and manufactures to corn-growing countries would be the certain result of the free admission of the agricultural produce of those countries into the British market; whereas it now appears that, the importation of that produce from the whole of southern and central Europe having *advanced* under the Free-trade system more than a thousand per cent. since 1846, our exports have at the same time *declined* 12½ per cent.:—

That, although our export trade has, since the establishment of the Free-trade system, greatly increased, *which increase is vauntingly proclaimed*, it increased, in an equal period, under the Protective system to a still greater extent, *which fact is carefully suppressed*; and that the *enormous* exports of the past year have been principally speculative,—have deluged every market of the world with goods not required by their legitimate wants,—and have, on the admission of the *Times*, been productive of *enormous* loss to the exporters:—

That the imports have also greatly augmented under the Free-trade policy, *yet not so greatly as they had increased in an equal period under the former Protective policy*; and that, during the last year, the speculative import of many important articles has exceeded the present power of consumption, and has entailed, by the same declaration of the *Times*, *greater loss* than that on the exports, which is described to have been *enormous*:—

That, notwithstanding the apparently flourishing state of the revenue in the aggregate, several branches of it exhibit unequivocal proof of decline in the power of purchase and in that profit on capital which constitutes the only permanent security for the employment of labour; the amount assessed on profits derived from trades and professions, under schedule D of the Income Tax Act, especially, having diminished from about 60,000,000*l.* in 1846 to about 50,000,000*l.* in 1851—proving that Mr. Hume was correct in asserting that “every man’s income is reduced:”—

That British maritime commerce has, under the Free-trade policy that repealed the Navigation Laws, sustained deep, alarming, and irreparable injury, while that fatal measure has imparted to the navigation of foreign and rival States, in the British carrying-trade, an almost incredible impulse; the tonnage of British ships entering our ports during the first two years succeeding the repeal having absolutely *declined*, while the foreign tonnage has *advanced nearly one million of tons, or 55 per cent*:—

That the British Colonies in all parts of the world, and especially the sugar-producing Colonies, have, under the blighting effects of the Free-trade policy, been plunged into a state of difficulty, discontent, disaster, and approaching ruin; rendering it almost impossible to discover what benefit is derived under the present system by the colonial possessions of the British Crown from their connexion with Great Britain, or by the mother

country from the retention of dependencies which, under that system, only entail cost and hazard on the parent State:—

That, while *poverty* stalks frightfully through the land, the boast of *diminished pauperism* is utterly without foundation; the *expenditure for the maintenance and relief of the poor* (though reduced from its amount in the famine—but Free-trade—years 1847 and 1848,) *absolutely exceeding in money amount, in 1851, with wheat at 39s. 11d. per quarter, the similar expenditure in the year of Protection, 1846, when the price of wheat was 53s. 3d. per quarter,*—thus exhibiting a greatly *increased* instead of diminished payment by the rate-payers:—

That the continued and increasing emigration from all parts of Great Britain, comprising numbers of English labourers, who are described in official evidence as “the prime of the country,” effectually negatives the Free-trade boast of universal prosperity, from which it is absurd to imagine that hundreds of thousands of intelligent men should voluntarily run away. And that, by diminishing the supply of labour, this “exodus” abundantly explains the reasons why the price of labour has not yet declined equally with the decline in the price of articles of subsistence, and calls on the Free-traders to explain why, concurrently with a relieved labour market and the “prosperity” they describe, so much pauperism as they themselves admit still remains a burden on the country.

All these deductions are undeniable, if the statements on which they are founded are true. Those statements are before the public, in a plain unvarnished form, put forward on the authority of public documents and the admissions and declarations of the most able of my opponents. *I dare them to the disproof of any one of those statements.* They may evade, distort, misrepresent, but they know they cannot controvert them. And, admitted, they demonstrate that the alleged general prosperity of the country is a delusion,—that it is artfully misrepresented or grossly exaggerated,—and that, to the limited extent to which it exists, it rests on a hollow and unsubstantial foundation, not alone of doubtful security, but certain quickly to crumble under the pressure of the consequences which the Free-trade impolicy is rapidly developing on the agricultural, commercial, colonial, shipping, and every other important interest of the State.

And now, admitting, as I do admit, that under a system the tendencies of which I have described as so disastrous, some degree

of advantage has for the moment been derived by the masses, which has blinded them to the perception of the temporary nature of the benefits they feel and the certain succession of distress and misery, it only remains that I should briefly explain the leading causes of the anomaly exhibited, and deduce from the whole the duty incumbent at this crisis on the friends of the Protective principle.

It has only, then, arisen from a concurrence of fortuitous circumstances, not foreseen or calculated on either by Free-traders or by Protectionists, that the bubble has not long since burst, and the hollow and destructive system been, by its consequences, exposed in all its naked deformity. And, first and chiefly, the discovery of the gold-fields in California. Long experience has proved that any considerable import of corn is sure to be followed by an export of gold in payment. Such a result was predicted by the opponents of the repeal of the Corn Laws as the certain consequence of that ill-omened measure, and with equal confidence denied by the Free-traders, who insisted that, under a removal of all restrictions on importation, payment would be made in British produce and manufactures. The predictions of the Protectionists have been fulfilled to the very letter. I have shown that, to the countries from whence we have drawn enormous supplies of corn, an absolutely diminished amount of British productions has been exported: nor, from the extent of the field over which the calculation ranges, can this have been balanced by any possible commercial transactions with other countries. The importations have, beyond all question, been paid for in gold; and, had it not been for the happy accident to which I have referred, beyond all question, too, the natural consequences would have followed:—drain on the coffers of the Bank,—contraction of circulation,—commercial derangement,—general distrust and embarrassment,—panic,—suspension of demand for industrial labour,—universal distress and discontent,—and the consequent exposure of the hollowness of the whole system. But California averted all. The efflux of gold to the East in payment for corn was more than met by the influx from the West, and, concurrently with an unexampled export of the precious metals, we find the Bank with nearly twenty millions of gold in its coffers; and Free-trade is thus, for the moment, relieved from an exposure of its rot-

tenness, and the people are yet a little longer continued in a delusive belief in its blessings.

But another unforeseen event, awful in its nature, but equally fortunate for the Free-traders, has likewise tended to keep up the delusion, and to postpone the dark and inevitable day of reckoning. The scourge of famine and disease, which has desolated and depopulated Ireland, has reprieved Free-trade by suspending its operation on the industrial population of Great Britain. It was impossible that two millions of the inhabitants of that unhappy portion of our fellow-subjects should be swept off, without the effects of such a terrible destruction acting on the market for human labour. Combined with active emigration, it has, beyond doubt, kept the supply of that labour, in many places and in many departments of industry, below the demand; and hence, to a considerable extent, the natural operation of the cost of subsistence on the wages of labour has been suspended; and the labourer,—feeling the benefit in the reduction of the price of his food caused by Free-trade imports, while the natural consequence of reduction of his wages to a level with the cost of food has not yet operated upon him to its full extent,—joins in the outcry for the maintenance of a system, which is only designed by its authors to reduce him to the level of the lowest of his competitors, and will infallibly and speedily produce that effect. But, meantime, the delusion continues; and, by its crafty denunciation of a bread-tax, Free-trade secures the support of the ignorant and clamorous of the labouring population.

I could, would my time and your space permit, explain many other causes of the temporary popularity of Free-trade doctrines. Let me, however, invite attention to the consideration of the powerful effect of the universal prevalence of combination among skilled workmen, in opposition to every Free-trade principle, in preventing the natural tendency of reduction in the price of provisions equivalently to reduce, by the operation of competition, the wages of labour. Let it, too, be considered how much the interests of the fundholder, the mortgagee, the annuitant of every description, the lawyer and physician, the official functionary, the army and navy, from the general and admiral to the seaman and private, must be benefited by cheapness, as long as their rate of interest, their fees, their salaries, and their payments for services,

are unreduced. But, if farmers are to live and pay charges from capital,—commercial men to find their enterprises produce “enormous loss,”—shipowners to see their property yield them no return,—colonists to be compelled to abandon their estates,—and “every man to find his income greatly reduced,”—how long can fundholder or annuitant, professional man or placeman, naval or military man, calculate on interest, or fee, or salary, or pay, remaining unchanged? More than all, how is employment to be found for the labourer, if profit on capital, the only true labour-fund, is annihilated or greatly reduced? I can but suggest these considerations. The reply must surely convince all to whom they are addressed, that, if for the moment they do obtain advantage from the system I assail, it is cruel and unjust to derive it from the ruin of their fellow-countrymen, and short-sighted and imprudent to maintain a system which, conferring on themselves a temporary advantage, dries up the springs from which alone a permanent flow of prosperity to all is possible.

With a short application of the whole subject on which I have been treating to our present political condition, I shall now conclude. Alas! how different might have been the condition of every interest of the country, if judicial blindness had not fallen on our rulers, and passion and prejudice swayed our countrymen! Recovering from the exhaustion of railway speculation, and in full possession of all the advantages of internal communication,—springing up with elastic bound from the paralysis and prostration of the commercial calamities of 1847,—standing erect and unscathed amid the political convulsions that have desolated Europe,—provided with unlooked-for abundance of material wealth in the wonderful gold discoveries in America and Australia,—to what a position of real prosperity might not Britain have attained, if she had but cultivated her home resources and encouraged her domestic productions, instead of pursuing at all costs the phantom of foreign trade and the insane endeavour to become the workshop of the world, leaving, in 1852, every interest of the State in the condition of exhaustion and insecurity in which I have shown all to be at this moment placed! I must not pursue the subject.

And now, in conclusion, what is our duty and our real interest? We have at length a Government based on the principle of Protection, presided over by a man—

“Upon whose brow shame is ashamed to sit.”

We are threatened by the opposition of a party who have already "chastised us with whips," but who, if they return to power, will assuredly "chastise us with scorpions." An appeal is about to be made, the issue of which must determine to which of the two the fate of the country is to be consigned. Can Protectionists hesitate? Yes, the demon of discord has kindled the spark of distrust, and Free-traders endeavour to fan it into flame. Farmers of England! You have given me your confidence in a degree to which (I fear) I can only present an inadequate claim. Yet, if sympathy, admiration, regard, sincerity, and earnestness can deserve your good-will, I have some title to it. Shipowners and all others connected with maritime affairs! You, too, have largely confided in me. Trust me still. I will not deceive you, even in this day of apostacy from the faith. Let me, then, solemnly conjure you at this crisis:—take, as electors, the only course that offers a chance of averting the consummation of your destruction. If you begin now to discuss Corn Laws and Navigation Laws, and fixed duties and sliding scales, and diminution of burdens, and the thousand and one expedients with which friends perplex and enemies decoy you, be assured you are lost. Divided and distracted, you will be defeated. Lord Derby's Government will be displaced. Lord John Russell, "taking to himself seven other spirits more evil than himself," will again be installed in power, and your "last state will be worse than the first." *Support, then, the Administration of the Earl of Derby, by supporting with all your power and all your energy Protectionist candidates, who will enable him to assist you.* He has pledged himself to carry out the Protective principle to the extent to which the constituencies may give him power, by the return to Parliament of a decided majority favourable to our principles. He can do no more. If even any of you are less satisfied than I am that his promises will be faithfully and honourably redeemed, still support him; for your choice lies between a Ministry at least favourably disposed toward you and one animated only by the most deadly hostility. Again, then, I say, select as candidates men whose character is a guarantee for their honesty, and ask them now only the one question—"Will you support the Government of Lord Derby?" It is too late to raise other points.

And now, Sir, my task is done. I have executed it imperfectly, but it has taxed my enfeebled powers beyond the strict bounds of

prudence, and I must for a time abstain from further political excitement. I have no fear for the final triumph of Protection. I advocate the principle, not for the benefit of landlords, or farmers, or colonists, or shipowners, or any class-interest, however great. It is because I believe in my soul and my conscience that the so-called Free-trade policy will, if persisted in, bring poverty and misery on the mass of my countrymen, and place in jeopardy the institutions of my country, and that *through a Protectionist policy alone can the big loaf, or any loaf at all, be permanently secured to the poor man*,—it is, I say, because I unhesitatingly entertain this belief that I am a Protectionist; and if I did not believe it, I would turn Free-trader to-morrow. If, then, this be so, the time cannot be distant when the masses, convinced by bitter experience, will clamour more loudly for Protection than they now vociferate for Free-trade:—and then will come the triumph of the Protectionists. But it will come through ruin and desolation, through convulsion and struggle, which I would fain avert; and therefore this effort. And if Free-trade be persisted in, and I should prove to be in error, no living man will more rejoice in discovering and acknowledging that error than, Sir,

Your faithful and obedient servant,

GEORGE FREDERICK YOUNG.

North Bank, Walthamstow,
April 17th, 1852.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from a 17th or 18th-century manuscript. The text is arranged in approximately 20 lines, though many are heavily faded and illegible. The ink is dark, and the paper shows signs of age and wear.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from a 17th or 18th-century manuscript. The text is arranged in approximately 10 lines, continuing from the top section. The ink is dark, and the paper shows signs of age and wear.



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